

Yukon 2000: A Community-Based Planning Effort to Preserve “Things That Matter”¹

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Abstract

In the late 1980s, the Yukon's New Democratic Party (NDP) government proved that an essentially community-based process could be used to plan the economic and environmental future of a vast sparsely populated region. The government was successful because the community-based approach was implemented systematically and comprehensively, with considerable effort invested in outreach to communities and citizens, before analyses began and recommendations emerged. The planning process used in the Yukon had two additional essential features: (1) it assumed that community needs had to be met if a quality strategy was to develop; and (2) it emphasized capacity building to increase local self-reliance and innovation.

Communities and regions contemplating a decentralized approach to regional strategic planning, involving citizens extensively in the planning effort, can learn from the Yukon's experience. However, areas with larger populations will have to be creative in developing means, such as those discussed in Weeks (2000) and Bryson and Anderson (2000), to assure widespread citizen and stakeholder involvement. One factor critical to the success of these efforts has been, and continues to be, the catalytic leadership of the Yukon's Territorial government (Luke, 1998).

Introduction

This article is about citizen participation in planning and how it was achieved. It focuses on the processes used to engage citizens in thinking systematically about the future of the Yukon Territory. Although it was an early effort in Canada to involve citizens and communities in planning, it does provide an excellent example of how the state, in this case the Yukon Territorial Government, interacts with both. We can learn from this experience by reviewing the following: (1) what happened and how it was accomplished; (2) whether goals of the community-based planning effort are being achieved; (3) whether additional actions are required; and (4) who provided leadership for the change effort.

In the late 1980s, then, the Yukon government boldly initiated a community-based citizen planning process that resulted in two documents, *Yukon*

Economic Strategy (Yukon Government, 1998) and *Yukon Conservation Strategy* (Yukon Government, 1990a). Together, these two documents and the process used to develop them became “Yukon 2000,” the Yukon’s vision of its economic and environmental future.

One initial important consequence of the Yukon 2000 process was the emergence of an interest in sustainability and sustainable development among participants. This interest in sustainable development evolved from discussions about the *Yukon Economic Strategy*, released in 1988. Yukoners, in developing this strategy, desired more environmental sensitivity—a sensitivity that would accurately reflect how they felt about their environment. In 1989, sustainable development as an operating concept was formally included in a second document, the *Yukon Conservation Strategy*. In that document, “sustainable development” was defined as using natural resources in such a way that they meet economic, social, and cultural needs, but do not deplete or degrade these resources to a point where they cannot meet the needs of future generations (Yukon Government, 1990a, p. 7). It is a longer-term perspective with goals that take into account impacts of resource utilization on a variety of factors important to the quality of life in a given area.

Yukon 2000 represented a breakthrough in the way regional development planning had been conducted in Canada up to that time (Boothroyd, 1988, p. 19; Decter, 1988, p. 23). This paper reviews the historic foundations of Yukon 2000 and its development. It also highlighted some of the strengths and weaknesses involved in this community/citizen-based process of planning the Yukon’s future. Of particular interest is whether, and under what conditions, this process might be transferable to other areas. In addition, since it has been some ten years since this community-based planning effort was initiated, the article concludes with a preliminary assessment of some of the outcomes that have emerged from this planned change effort.

This research was completed in two phases. I initially learned about the Yukon 2000 process in June 1991, when as executive director of the Pacific Northwest Canadian Studies Consortium, we brought a group of American faculty on a study-visit to the Yukon. After that visit I wanted to learn more about the community-based planning process to “preserve things that matter,” which the Yukon government had introduced to the study-group during briefings. In 1991-1992 research on the Yukon 2000 process was completed and presented as a conference paper (Collins & Downes, 1992). Information for that phase of the project was drawn from Yukon government documents, assessments of the process prepared by the Economic Council of Canada (Dector & Kowall, 1989) and the Ottawa-based Canadian Arctic Resources Committee (Boothroyd, 1988), and correspondence plus discussions with several key participants in the planning process.

A second, and much more limited phase of the research, was undertaken this past year. What has been accomplished over the past 10 years and why? Are goals of this planning process being achieved and how do we know this? What has been the role of the Council on the Economy and Environment in implementation efforts? What lessons have been learned? Is the Yukon more sustainable today than it was when the Yukon 2000 process was completed?

Learning more about implementation of Yukon 2000, specifically what has been accomplished over the past ten years and what lessons have emerged from this effort, is an extremely challenging task. These are very difficult questions to answer, particularly without additional on-site research. Unfortunately, I was unable to undertake that research due to lack of funding and time. Nevertheless, I have tried to provide preliminary information about implementation of Yukon 2000. However, conclusions based on this information should be viewed as initial observations in need of further empirical verification.

I have relied heavily on reports of the Yukon government, including those of the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment (YCEE), as well as several studies of the Yukon 2000 process. This was done in order to learn about the government's role since its leadership seemed critical to both the Yukon 2000 process and to implementation of Yukon 2000 recommendations. In addition to information gained from government officials during a June 1991 study visit, interviews were also conducted this past year by telephone and email with resource persons in the Yukon identified as knowledgeable about implementation efforts. It should be noted that these resource persons, in assessing implementation of recommendations, had quite different opinions about the success of this change effort. Clearly many short-term goals had (or currently are) been achieved. However, there was very real concern among some of those interviewed, particularly those outside the Territorial government, about whether or not longer-term goals like diversification of the economy, community capacity building, and sustainability, are really being achieved (McTiernan, 1999).

Background: Yukon Territory Prior to Yukon 2000

The Yukon Territory is over 480,000 square kilometers in geographic area (Robinson, 1989). It is about the size of Spain and is larger than seven other Canadian provinces. It is sparsely populated, containing 0.06 people per square kilometer, and has large land areas without any population. The Yukon has long struggled with the limitations of isolation and smallness (Coates & Morrison, 1992, p. 323).

In 1989, the Yukon had a population of 29,845 people, two-thirds of whom reside in the capital city, Whitehorse. By 1999, Yukon's population had risen to 31,070 with over 70 percent in Whitehorse. The remaining population

is spread across fifteen smaller communities and a number of outlying settlements (McTiernan, 1999, p. 91). More than 36 percent of resident Yukoners are under 25 years of age. Aboriginals make up about 25-30 percent of the population. Historically, Yukon's economy has been based on mining, trade and services, and governmental activities (Staples, 1988, pp. 4-5; Morrison, 1998). Most Yukoners are employed in trade and services and not in mining or goods producing activities. For example, 35 percent of the 13,442 people employed in 1999 worked for some level of government.

During the 1980s, the Yukon's economy experienced a major economic slowdown. The dominant lead-zinc mine, the Cyprus Anvil Mine, along with the other hard rock mines and the railroad, shut down altogether. In fact, between 1980 and 1985, the city of Faro's population, supported in large part by the Cyprus Anvil Mine, plummeted from 2,300 residents to a low of about 80 (Decter & Kowall, 1989, pp. 1-2, 9). With the mining sector essentially closed, the Yukon economy was, for a time, largely supported by Federal government transfer payments, supplemented to a degree by revenue from tourism. This was the case historically, except when the Cyprus Anvil Mine was operating.

Although, in 1986 the Cyprus Anvil mine reopened under new ownership, it has had a checkered history of ownership and operation. For example, the mine has high operating costs, particularly for labor and for transportation of the ore to smelters outside the Yukon, since there are none inside the Territory. This means that when mineral prices drop closures frequently occur. Diversification of the economy continues to be a pressing ongoing need, and lack of diversification, a serious problem. This was one of the factors precipitating interest among Yukoners in developing a new approach to planning the Territory's economic future.

History and Foundations of Yukon 2000

In the Yukon, political change in the mid-1980s at the Territorial government level created a favorable context for initiating a new approach to economic development, one that ultimately would focus on achieving sustainable development of the region. With the election in 1985 of a New Democratic Party (NDP) government, and its leader Tony Penikett, support emerged for a community-based approach to economic development, one which would integrally involve citizens in helping to plan for the Territory's economic future. Economic diversification and import substitution feature prominently in the public policy pronouncements of the newly elected government (Decter, 1988, p. 23). The NDP endorsed community-based economic planning to carry out their pronouncements. This community-based approach represented a significant departure from past administrations that had undertaken central government, top-down, economic planning.

Top down planning by government experts is fairly common in Canada as well as elsewhere (Levy, 2000). In the Yukon, this type of planning focused on sustaining externally controlled resource extracting industries, particularly mining. It tended to overlook local economic needs and aspirations and as a result frequently had little impact on the Territory's overall economic development (Levy, 2000). Lacking understanding of community economic issues, top down planning failed to address Yukoners' concerns over dependence on imported goods and the severe boom and bust cycles characteristic of an economy and communities dependent primarily on mining (Decter & Kowell, 1989, p. 7).

The community-based approach endorsed by the New Democratic Party, assumed from the beginning, that community needs must be met if a quality economic strategy is to develop. Therefore, communities had to be involved in the planning process. Another important feature was the focus on capacity building aimed at increasing local self-reliance and innovation (Decter & Kowell, 1989, p. viii). The isolation and rugged lifestyles of Yukoners provide an initial basis for building a self-reliant society. A community-based planning process builds on this foundation. A final feature of the community-based approach has to do with the systematic and comprehensive nature of the planning effort. Yukon's Territorial government proved that an essentially community-based planning process could be used in a vast sparsely populated region—if carried out systematically and if considerable effort is invested in outreach to communities and engaging citizens in the process, before analysis begins.

Yukon 2000 Processes

Yukon Economic Strategy

Yukon 2000 is the Yukon's vision of its future. In creating this vision, the region's citizens began by developing an economic strategy. The strategy provided a blueprint of where and how Yukon wanted economic change to occur. Two simultaneous and interdependent processes, one consultative and the other analytical, were used in preparing the *Yukon Economic Strategy* (Yukon Government, 1988).

Both processes were guided by goals agreed to early in the consultation. Very much in the spirit of community-based development, these goals reinforced an interest in sustainable development, a goal that emerged from later discussions. Briefly, the *four broad goals* focused on the option to stay in Yukon, through increased self-reliance; local control over the economic future of the Territory; an acceptable quality of life; and equality for all Yukoners, including women and Aborigines (Yukon Government, 1988, p. 3).

Consultation Process

The first process involved consultation and consisted of a series of community meetings, workshops, three major conferences, and discussions, held over a two-year period beginning in June 1986. These talks between the people of the Yukon and the government set out a program to help Yukoners achieve agreed-upon goals. Since no one else in Canada had attempted to develop a regional economic-conservation strategy based on extensive citizen involvement, staff had to learn to adapt as they went (*Northern Perspectives*, 1988, pp. 14-15). As a result, schedules, activities, and processes were modified based on learning that occurred through experience. For example, early on facilitators realized the need to slow down the consultation process and decrease the size of the final conference so more effective discussion and decision-making could take place.

Phase One of the consultation process began with a workshop in Faro, home of the Cyprus Anvil Mine that devastated Yukon's economy with its closing in 1982. This was an appropriate site to remind workshop delegates both about how vulnerable the region's economy was to external events and about the seriousness of the process they were undertaking. Approximately sixty delegates, including business, labor, and community leaders, and representatives from Yukon's Aboriginal peoples, attended the Faro workshop. It was decided in Faro that government must shift more of its activities to communities, improve rural services, and spearhead research into northern farming, forestry, and placer mining (Decter, 1988, pp. 24-25). The real purpose of this workshop, however, was to draft goals to guide later strategy-building sessions.

Following the Faro workshop, the government designated the Yukon Economic Council as the monitoring authority for the initiative. The Council commissioned research in four areas: renewable resources, non-renewable resources and industries, community issues, and human resources. This research became part of the analysis process, along with sixteen "linkage" studies, which examined factors which might facilitate economic development across a wide range of sectors (Decter & Kowall, 1989, pp. 11-12).

Over the next several months, meetings were held with industry representatives to explore strategies that might encourage economic development. Meetings were also held with community leaders, including those from both urban and rural areas, including Chiefs and other First Nation Band representatives. Two workshops focused on the role of women and youth in the economy, groups routinely omitted from economic development planning (Decter & Kowall, 1989, p. 13).

Following this consultation, a conference was held in Whitehorse in November 1986 to review work accomplished to date. In addition to reviewing

reports about various industrial sectors, this conference developed a report entitled *The Things That Matter* (Yukon Government, 1987).

Phase Two of the consultation process essentially involved refining recommendations developed in Phase One. The process used was similar to the one described previously except that focus groups, rather than a large conference, reviewed recommendations. The other important component of this phase was setting priorities among options to be included in the draft economic strategy.

Phase Three involved full public review of the draft strategy through a conference convened in Dawson City in October 1987. A final version of the strategy was prepared and released to the public in the spring of 1988. Monitoring and review was to be carried out by Cabinet and the Yukon Economic Council. Cabinet was to monitor implementation on a continuing basis and provide central coordination to ensure Yukon 2000 priorities were reflected in government budgeting and departmental programs. The Yukon Economic Council also was to monitor implementation and report annually on progress to date. The Council was to recommend issues to the Territory's Minister of Economic Development for further review (Yukon Government, 1988, p. 6).

Analytic Process

The second process used in developing the economic strategy was an analytical one that generated over 30 reports about the Yukon economy (Decter & Kowall, 1989, p. 23). These reports, which were of three types, provided useful information for meetings and conferences. Ideas from each report were incorporated into the document, *The Things That Matter*.

An initial set of background papers, commissioned at the initial Faro workshop in 1986, provided information about economic development possibilities and factors affecting Yukon's economic development potential. These papers were submitted for discussion at the Whitehorse conference held in the fall of 1986. A second set of papers, commissioned as a result of Whitehorse conference discussions focused on the region's economic environment: the structure of the economy; human, natural, financial, and information resources; and infrastructure. A final set of papers analyzed important industries in Yukon and addressed the following questions: What do we have? What do we need? How do we get what we need? All sectors were reviewed, including the non-wage economy and the territory's hunting, trapping, and guiding industry.

An example is the report on tourism. A comprehensive set of ideas and initiatives were developed for this sustainable industry, which has become an important and growing part of Yukon's economy. Although seasonal in nature, tourism benefits other sectors of the economy. Discussion concentrated on: (1) how to make the Yukon a destination point for tourists rather than

simply a stopover for tourists on their way to Alaska; and (2) how to get tourists to make return visits to the Yukon.

Individuals involved in Yukon 2000 suggest that in those areas where consultation was assisted, informed by analytical reports, for example, resulting policy advice seemed to be more precise (Decter & Kowall, 1989, pp. 24-25). In general, as a method of creating policy, tying analysis to consultation grounds policy in the realities of unique economic sectors. Also, the process of reworking analytical ideas in the conference often led to more manageable solutions and policy alternatives. It facilitated consensus building around important issues. Furthermore, competition between interests and political partisanship, which could pose threats to the consultation process, was minimized. This was accomplished by allowing various participants to identify conflicts and resolve them through direct interpersonal contact and discussion (Boothroyd, 1988, pp. 19-20).

Yukon Conservation Strategy

Dedicated to the Yukon's elders, who have shown us the way, and to the Yukon's children, who will follow.

– Yukon Government, 1990a, p. 1

The expression “conservation strategy” was first used in the late 1970s when three international groups began working on a broad and ambitious plan to ensure the ongoing health of the planet. By 1980 these groups had published a World Conservation Strategy containing many appropriate suggestions and ideas for sustainable development. One fundamental message, often expressed by the phrase “think globally, act locally,” encouraged nations and regions to prepare their own conservation strategies (Yukon Government, 1990a, pp. 76-77).

Yukon was the first area in Canada to follow this advice. The major criticism of early efforts by the Yukon Territorial Government to develop a conservation strategy focused on the lack of “adequate public debate and discussion of resource management principles, objectives, issues, and priorities, as they might be integrated and reflected in a conservation strategy document” (McTiernan, 1990, p. 35). Yukon 2000 represented an effort to deal with this concern by extensively involving citizens and other stakeholder in the strategy development process. It was argued that this effort would assure the widespread support a conservation strategy needed for effective implementation.

But, why did the Yukon need a conservation strategy? The primary purpose, as set forth in the *Yukon Conservation Strategy* (1990a, p. 6), is to enhance the future economic and social well-being of Yukoners through the wise use of natural resources. Other reasons for preparing the conservation strategy, included, the need for: a healthy environment, a stable non-renewable resource sector, a strong tourism industry, healthy small businesses, community

development, maintenance of culture and lifestyles, and protection of heritage resources (Yukon Government, 1990a, pp. 6-7).

The similarities between the processes used in developing the economic strategy and the conservation one are indeed encouraging (Yukon Government, 1990a, pp. 77-78). The latter involved Yukoners directly through a public working group formed in the summer of 1987. This group brought together a broad range of resource management interests. A government working group was also formed to help guide discussions on the evolving conservation strategy and in recognition that some issues extended beyond the scope of the Territory's Department of Renewable Resources. Made up of territorial and federal government representatives, this group provided an internal forum for discussion of the developing conservation strategy.

In the spring of 1988, a weekend workshop defined the concepts and ideas that formed the basic components of the conservation strategy. Efforts were undertaken to improve public awareness of the strategy by releasing a discussion paper for public review in November 1989. In addition, a series of briefings was held to inform interested groups, including First Nations, of the strategy. Four workshops were later held on related topics—environmental codes of practice for industry, environmental and conservation education, traditional aboriginal knowledge and resource management, and recycling.

Strengths & Weaknesses of Yukon's Community-Based Planning Effort

Consideration of Special Sectors

Yukon 2000 incorporated an economic strategy that clearly proved more useful than previous ones. For example, because the process was community-based, it considered all sectors of the economy, not just wage-based ones. In developing the economic strategy this was accomplished through discussion with Yukoners involved in the Aboriginal *and* in the non-wage (housekeeping, subsistence, and volunteer) economies. Premier Penikett understood the problem when he stated, "we gained a sense that many people traditionally described as 'unemployed' are not idle at all but are very busy. The traditional measures of some economic activities . . . are nets with big holes in them because they miss a lot; they don't capture a lot of the reality of our economy" (*Northern Perspectives*, 1988, p. 15).

The Aboriginal Economy

Yukon First Nations have frequently been ignored or at least misunderstood on issues related to the economy. Much of this misunderstanding is the result of an industrial economy at odds with Aboriginal culture (for example, a perception that if an Aboriginal is not involved in wage work, he or she is unem-

ployed). Furthermore, the Aboriginal economy is seen as separate from the non-Aboriginal one, rather than as a distinct economy intertwined with it (Green, 1988, p. 12). This has prevented understanding of the Aboriginal economy on its own terms (Yukon Government, 1987, pp. 2-10, 11).

Involving First Nations as equal participants in the Yukon 2000 process was a very useful initial step toward increasing understanding of the Aboriginal economy and the position of First Nations on other issues. Currently, through a system of proportional representation, First Nations also participate as equal members on various strategy implementation monitoring councils. Settlement of land claims, self-government, devolution of programs to native communities, assistance in developing the Aboriginal craft industry, including the formation of co-ops, are some of the additional actions taken by the Yukon government in support of First Nation initiatives to become self-sustaining and full participants in Yukon's economic life and society.

The Non-Wage Economy

The non-wage economy includes volunteers, subsistence activities and house-keeping. The contributions of these activities to economic development are not well understood by economists or others. The Economic Strategy recognizes this and includes one objective that encourages employers to view non-wage work experience as a valuable asset for future employment (Decter & Kowall, 1989, p. 37).

As for other activities in the non-wage sector, particularly in rural areas, few organizations would exist if it were not for volunteers. In Yukon alone there are more than 300 community societies as well as 83 boards appointed to assist different branches of government (Yukon Government, 1987, pp. 13-1, 2). Volunteerism is a vital part of every local economy. In fact, the quantity of volunteer activity in the Yukon is estimated to be higher than in other regions of Canada; therefore, it has particular significance to Yukon society. One reason is that volunteer associations in the Yukon, as well as throughout the rest of Canada, receive federal government funding distributed, in the Yukon's case, through the Territorial government. These funds enhance membership by enabling travel to conferences, meetings, and events outside the territory.

Housekeeping, the second activity, has traditionally been performed by women. However, family members increasingly share homemaking activities, including childcare. The impact of these activities on the economy is either underestimated or completely omitted by economists. Housekeeping work and skills are not fully appreciated or valued. Furthermore, homemakers often work in paid jobs and need flexible working hours. Once the importance and unique needs of homemakers are recognized, needed support systems can be developed.

Subsistence activities include harvesting of animals, fish, and plant resources for food and fuel. These activities are important to many Yukoners, not only because of their economic value, but also because of their social, cultural, and spiritual importance (Fuller & McTiernan, 1987). There is strong support for viewing the subsistence economy as not merely a part of the larger economy, but as a unique and vital economy in itself (Yukon Government, 1987, pp. 14-1, 2).

According to those interviewed and published reports, the Territorial government has begun to recognize, largely as a result of Yukon 2000, that subsistence plays a large role in the overall economy. Aboriginals represent a good proportion of those involved in subsistence activities through practice of a traditional lifestyle. In addition, many non-Aboriginals have adopted this lifestyle as well. The Territorial government is now attempting to improve its knowledge of this unique but important sector and to foster its sustainability.

An important strength of the economic strategy developed in Yukon 2000, then, was work involved in trying to understand special sectors of the economy, such as the Aboriginal and other non-wage ones, and in gauging their impact on Yukon's economic future. This greatly expanded knowledge about the regional economy. It would be important research for similarly situated communities in other parts of Canada.

The Citizen Involvement Process

Today, we know a lot more about the variety in large-group interaction methods for involving citizens in planning and implementing major change efforts in communities and organizations (Weeks, 2000). These structured processes are designed to: "(1) enhance the amount of relevant information brought to bear on a problem; (2) build commitment to problem definitions and solutions; (3) fuse planning and implementation; and (4) shorten the amount of time needed to conceive and execute major policies, programs, services, or projects" (Bryson & Anderson, 2000, p. 143). The use of citizen involvement methods has become increasingly commonplace in both Canada and in the United States. (Simonsen & Robbins, 2000). Nevertheless, as Bryson and Anderson (2000, p. 152) conclude in a recent review article of seven of these methods, we still have little systematic understanding of the circumstances or conditions under which each method for enhancing involvement works best.

In practice most citizen involvement methods turn out to be hybrids of some sort, involving such activities as large and small group meetings, focus groups, questionnaires and interviews, and so on. This was certainly the case with Yukon 2000 involvement processes. Critically important was the flexibility of government facilitators—their willingness to adapt the process to new circumstances and challenges as they arose and to use a variety of methods

for involving citizens in the planning effort. A continuing challenge, however, remains how to sustain citizen engagement and enhance civil society, so citizens remain integrally involved in the action planning needed to achieve a more sustainable Yukon.

Another important strength of the Yukon 2000 process was its task-oriented style and future focus. For instance, initial workshops were informal and focused on brainstorming ideas. Participants had many opportunities to be heard. This not only encouraged participation but built consensus and understanding among participants. Positive relationships developed. This enabled participants to focus on tasks to be completed, rather than on hostile debate or grandstanding. Furthermore, open communication overcame partisan conflicts. It produced sincere discussion rather than rhetoric, serious problem solving rather than scapegoating, and listening as much as talking and selling (Boothroyd, 1988, p. 20).

Another strength, particularly in developing the economic strategy, involved the effort to combine locally generated ideas with analyses and apply them to an entire region. Government's effort to be responsive to participants' concerns and suggestions resulted in strong initial support from communities and various key actors.

Overall, then, Yukon's NDP government was committed to empowering citizens and to enhancing their participation in planning a sustainable future for the Yukon. Yukoners learned that such participation can be challenging, intense, highly involving, and fun (Bryson & Anderson, 2000, p. 145). However, even the best designed process will not by itself produce a desired outcome, such as a more sustainable Yukon: "These techniques seem best suited for helping decision makers understand the choices citizens at large would make if they were informed about the complexities of the issues" (Simonsen & Robbins, 2000, p. 120). To achieve a visionary goal like sustainability requires leadership, effective management, and sufficient resources (Simonsen & Robbins, 2000, p. 122).

One weakness of the planning process arose from the sheer size and complexity of the undertaking and attendant costs. It is easy to be critical of a process that cost over \$400,000 Canadian with unclear benefits. The time required before benefits appear leaves the process open for years to skepticism. At the conclusion of the initial Yukon 2000 planning process this was probably not viewed as a weakness. Participants were energized by the process of planning Yukon's future and as NDP leader Tony Penikett noted, it is the process as much as the product that matters (*Northern Perspectives*, 1988, p. 14).

In democratic, community-based, planning there is concern that more powerful and, hence, better organized groups, will dominate less powerful ones. In Yukon 2000 this did not occur because resources were dedicated to

assisting such groups in presenting and, if necessary, in formulating their own cases (Boothroyd 1989, p. 20). The NDP government was committed to involving all segments of Yukon society in the process.

It might have been fairer if organization of processes and writing of reports were completed by an independent organization with its own secretariat to do the writing. This would reduce confusion over government's role and alleviate concerns about conflicts-of-interest (Boothroyd, 1989, p. 20). However, it is difficult to say whether government's role was an issue. The Territorial government certainly wanted to minimize its leadership of the process. But given its impact on Yukon's economy and environment, major role-playing was inevitable. Who else could or would provide needed catalytic leadership (Luke, 1998) and resources for such a comprehensive planning effort?

The Commitments

At the initial conclusion of the Yukon 2000 community-based planning process, it was difficult to comment on the quality of the commitments, including goals, established. Desired outcomes usually take longer to achieve and measurement is needed in order to know whether or not they are being accomplished. Required is the development of an outcome evaluation system involving indicators, an assessment process, continuous ongoing monitoring, and reporting of results. Without such a system, it is difficult to determine whether goals are being achieved. It is also difficult to determine whether the policy, program, and/or project choices being made are responsible.

Yukon 2000 revealed that changes in established ways of thinking and acting would be required to accomplish agreed upon goals, including the ultimate vision of a more sustainable Yukon. Such changes could, if implemented, go a long way to maintaining momentum and sustaining a planning effort of this magnitude.

Initially, the focus is on incremental changes, which are easily achieved in the short-run. This builds support for more difficult non-incremental changes needed to achieve a sustainable Yukon. However, "changing established ways of thinking and acting is a difficult and long-term task" (Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment, 1990, p. 4). There are no quick fixes. Required for a successful change effort are: (1) leadership, including stakeholders like government willing to change policies and programs; (2) ongoing allocation of sufficient resources by government and other stakeholders to support the change effort; (3) citizen education and other community capacity building activities designed to assure citizen engagement, involvement, and leadership; (4) longer term strategic thinking and planning; and (5) ongoing assessment and reporting of outcomes being achieved.

For example, although Yukoners desire regional self-reliance and “decolonization” of the Territorial economy, these are clearly very difficult goals to achieve, given prevailing obstacles. Similarly, the desire to diversify the region’s economy raises the issue of whether Yukon can generate sustainable economic growth internally, since isolation from markets and population centers makes it an unlikely candidate for externally stimulated economic development. Continued financial dependency on the allocation of resources by the Federal government in Ottawa also does not make this task any easier.

Lessons from Yukon 2000

Community-Based Planning

First, bringing citizens into a strategic planning process early encourages acceptance of the process and eventual outcomes. The ongoing challenge becomes how to sustain citizen engagement in subsequent planning-implementation activities.

Second, government can provide needed catalytic leadership for a comprehensive community-based planning process, facilitating and funding it (Luke, 1998). The challenge for government is how to provide such leadership without taking over and completely dominating the process.

According to Luke (1998, p. xiv), because public problems like economic and sustainable development are increasingly interconnected and interorganizational, crossing functional and jurisdictional boundaries, no one entity has the authority, influence, or resources to dictate solutions to problems. Catalytic leaders are required to assist in dealing with these problems (Luke, 1998, p. xv). Such leaders have different skills and play different roles. They are responsible for four critical tasks: (1) focusing attention by elevating the issue to the public and policy agendas; (2) engaging people in the effort by conveying the diverse set of people, agencies, and interests needed to address the issue; (3) stimulating multiple strategies and options for action; and (4) sustaining action and maintain momentum by managing the interconnections through appropriate institutionalization and rapid information sharing and feedback. In Yukon 2000, the Territorial government, particularly individuals from Penikett’s staff and from Territorial government agencies, successfully engaged citizens in tasks numbers one through three above, provided catalytic leadership for the change effort. However, according to those interviewed, the jury is still out on how effectively the Territorial government is performing the fourth critical task.

Third, establishing, financing, and otherwise supporting an agency at arms length to carry out additional planning, monitoring, assessment, and reporting, is crucial to assuring community ownership and management. This is a role that the Yukon Council on the Economy and Environment (YCEE)

has recently begun to assume. Although it has been assigned extensive responsibilities by the Territorial government, the YCEE remains underfunded and understaffed, according to several of those interviewed.

Finally, to insure citizen commitment to this type of planning, communities must be re-consulted and involved as partners in implementation activities. The YCEE has recently concluded such a community consultation process. It learned that Yukoners continue to support overall Yukon 2000 goals, particularly the need for further economic diversification. However, the YCEE remains challenged by how best to enhance engagement of citizens in planning for a more sustainable Yukon as well as selected Territorial government departments.

Yukon 2000 does provide one model for community-based regional strategic planning. Communities and regions contemplating a decentralized approach to such planning can learn from Yukon's experience. The Yukon's small population proved to be an advantage. Areas with larger populations will have to work creatively to assure widespread citizen and stakeholder involvement.

Nevertheless, at the conclusion of the initial community-based planning phase of this change effort, a number of questions could not be answered. For example: Has the goodwill generated during the consultation process been preserved? Have implementation efforts undertaken, been congruent with the action strategies developed by Yukon 2000 participants? How will implementation activities be funded? Have they achieved desired results? Have citizen and other key stakeholders continued to be involved in implementation efforts? If programs are not implemented effectively and in a timely manner, will rising expectations among Yukon 2000 participants turn to disillusionment? Will sectors other than the public one share the burdens of implementation (Decter, 1988, p. 26)? Who provides leadership for the change effort?

Achieving Initial Short Term Goals

As early as 1991, the Third Progress Report on the Yukon Economic Strategy (YES) concluded the following: "A great deal of progress has been made toward implementing most of the commitments of the Yukon Economic Strategy. The YES continues to act as a blueprint for government policy and program development" (Yukon Economic Development, 1991, p. 9).

The Yukon Government made 230 commitments to change in order to work toward the four broad goals outlined in the YES (Yukon Economic Development, 1991, p. 1). These goals included the option to stay in the Yukon (through increased self-reliance); control of the future (through increased regional and local decision making, and higher levels of Yukon ownership), an acceptable quality of life (through wages, business opportunities and pub-

lic services comparable with the rest of Canada); and equality (through development that ensures equal economic opportunities).

Although progress toward achieving these goals has been mixed, according to those interviewed, their importance was reconfirmed in mid-1999 during a series of 14 community conferences sponsored by the YCEE. Furthermore, Yukon's Territorial government continues to be seen by citizens and other stakeholders as having a central role in achieving these goals.

The recently held community conferences again called attention to the critical importance of one of the central principles of YES—the promotion of economic diversification of Yukon's economy to overcome the historic and narrow dependencies on mining, tourism, and government spending. Clearly these principles, along with sustainability to a lesser extent, have been the key ones guiding economic policy (and other policy choices) in the Yukon. The Yukon is not removed from global problems. Historic economic swings provide sound justification for establishing objectives that ensure wise use of resources to further economic diversification. Achieving such a goal requires large amounts of risk capital and continuous investment in small business development. It also requires a significant investment in a communications-telecommunications and transportation infrastructure.

Although there is a continuing effort to balance economic interests with environmental protection, "there has been little integration of social or cultural concerns—or what some participants referred to as 'human elements'—into the equation" (Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment, 1990, p. 6). According to some of those interviewed, equity issues are being neglected. What appears to be needed is greater coordination and integration of various reports prepared by the Yukon government (including reports on the State of the Environment, Health Status as well as conservation and the economy). These could become the basis for an overall report prepared each year on progress toward achieving the economic, environmental, and social goals critical to a more sustainable Yukon. In addition, where is the systematic monitoring of indicators to assess whether intended outcomes are being achieved and at what cost?

Further evidence of accomplishments was noted in a much later, 1998 report of the Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment (YCEE). That report "estimated that 95 percent of Yukon government commitments under the Yukon Conservation Strategy had been met or were being implemented and that further implementation was dependent on the settlement of land claims and the transfer of additional federal programs such as forestry" (Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment, 1998, p. 6; Cameron & White, 1995; Dacks, 1990).

Ten Years Later: Achieving Longer Term Goals

Yukon 2000's community-based process engaged citizens in planning a more sustainable future for the Yukon. Yukon's Territorial government provided catalytic leadership for that community-based process. The Territorial government has also played a key role in assuring implementing of many Yukon 2000 planning process recommendations. One should not underestimate the complexity and challenge involved in achieving the longer term goal of a sustainable future for the Yukon, a goal that cannot be achieved without also building community self reliance and further diversifying Yukon's economy. Physical isolation, dependency on federal transfer payments, extreme climatic conditions, a small population base, limited resources, and so on, make achieving that goal extremely problematic, although challenging. Government and other stakeholders have key roles to play. At issue should not be whether government can play a leadership role, but how it can engage other stakeholders in the longer term change effort.

Canada has been a leader in advocating and planning for both sustainable development and sustainable communities (Downes, 1995, p. 359). The success of its efforts to build a sustainable society has required government leadership at all levels. In this tradition, the Yukon's Territorial government initiated a collaborative multi-stakeholder planning process to achieve sustainability. The Yukon's round table, the Council on the Environment and the Economy, is responsible for overseeing further planning and implementing efforts. It is the forum where environment-economy conflicts can be resolved through continuous stakeholder consultation. The result can be whole system planning to meet present needs without compromising future needs.

Sustainable development is a community-based process directed toward achieving optimum states of human and environmental well-being without compromising the possibilities for other people, at other times and places to do the same (Downes, 1995, p. 363). This definition focuses attention on community, equity, and the interrelationship between the environment and the economy. It requires citizens and other stakeholders to understand the connections not only between environment and economy, but more generally among the elements, other species, and other people that are the world around us. Furthermore, the overwhelming focus on economic growth and productivity, coupled with a systematic forgetting of environmental and social costs must be reversed to move toward a sustainable society—a sustainable Yukon. Capacity building to achieve local self-reliance, economic viability, environmental integrity, and social equity, are all required for a more sustainable future to emerge. However, without leadership by important stakeholders working cooperatively to achieve these goals, Yukon's sustainability change effort is unlikely to be successful.

Several lessons, then, emerge from review of Yukon 2000 implementation efforts over the past ten years, particularly ones related to achieving the long-term goal of a sustainable Yukon.

Lesson One: A major lesson has to do with the difficulty of sustaining a comprehensive change effort of the sort envisioned in the Yukon 2000 planning process without political will and leadership by the Territorial government. Government has a critical role to play in assuring that the longer-term goals of such a planning process are achieved.

In the case of the Yukon, the Territorial government has the capacity, including the intellectual and monetary resources, to initiate the policies, programs, and projects necessary to achieve a sustainable future for the Yukon. They have the capacity to influence other stakeholders, particularly critical private sector ones, to join in taking supportive actions. They also have the ability to facilitate community capacity building and ongoing citizen involvement in the process. Catalytic leadership, then, by Yukon's Premier, by its Legislative Assembly members, and by its senior civil servants, all seem critically important to the success of the change effort. In addition, the federal government, through its devolution policies, could facilitate the Territorial government's leadership role in this process.

For example, settlement of Aboriginal land claims and final transfer of all remaining "provincial-type programs to the Territorial government" would enable the Yukon to assume greater control over its future development. As Cameron and White observed in 1995 (24-25): "The federal government cannot, nor should it, unilaterally dictate how northern governments evolve. But it can assist this important process by providing a stable and supportive policy framework so that northern governments evolve in a way and at a rate that ensures political stability and sustainable economic growth."

Lesson Two: A second lesson is that a fundamental change effort of this magnitude challenges the status quo and the various interests that benefit from current policies and activities. Resistance from these interests is to be expected. Such resistance is difficult to overcome and can become a powerful obstacle to the fundamental changes needed to achieve a sustainable future for the Yukon. Unfortunately, these interests use their power and authority to block change efforts. Overcoming resistance to change requires ongoing committed leadership by the Territorial government as well as other stakeholders. It requires holding accountable those responsible for achieving results designed to achieve sustainability.

Unfortunately, both leadership and political will (a willingness to undertake necessary actions to achieve a sustainable Yukon) lagged considerably after a more conservative government was elected in 1992. Although the New Democratic Party returned to power in 1996, it also appeared unwilling to undertake major policy changes designed to assure a more sustainable Yu-

kon. The recent election of a Liberal party government in April 2000, may provide added impetus to the Yukon 2000 change effort.

Lesson Three: A third lesson, then, is that without commitment and leadership by the political party in power, senior civil servants, as well as others, will return to conducting “business as usual.” According to several of those interviewed, maintaining the traditional resource extraction, i.e., mining, economy, despite the costs involved, becomes the task of these “maintenance people.” Particularly unfortunate has been the lack of support for fundamental economic diversification by some key senior government officials. With the mining industry “in the dumpster” over the past years and probably for the foreseeable future, concerted actions to further diversify Yukon’s economy seem even more important to undertake today than they did at the conclusion of the planning process. Effective planning requires visionaries competent to help guide such actions, and at present none have come forward.

On the other hand, there has been support and effort by the Territorial government to promote economic diversification within and between sectors of the economy. This includes promotion of the locally based furniture and manufacturing industries; development of the cultural industries (music, film, etc.); promotion of trade and export opportunities across different sectors; development of the forestry and oil and gas sectors; development of the tourism sector; and promotion of agriculture.

Communities need an economy unencumbered by “boom and bust” cycles endemic to the mining and other resource extraction industries. According to those interviewed, such industries should “add value” in good times but not undermine community viability and livability in bad times.

Lesson Four: A fourth lesson, then, is that to achieve such an outcome requires new ways of thinking and behaving. This certainly has taken place as a result of the Yukon 2000 planning process. Particularly important are creative and innovative uses of scarce resources. Also important is the development of cooperative and collaborative problem solving relationships involving partnerships that link sectors in common cause creating new investments and risk capital for sustainability initiatives.

For example, the Yukon government’s recent Economic Forums (www.gov.yk.ca/forums/) were designed to promote new ways of thinking and behaving. There have also been efforts by the government to develop risk capital and new investment funding. This includes the establishment of the Yukon Government Fund Limited; the Connect Yukon project; a micro-loan fund program; a small business investment tax credit; and a labor-sponsored investment funds. Furthermore, according to one government official, virtually all the Yukon government’s initiatives involve some level of consultation or collaborative problem social relationship(s).

What seems to have emerged, however, are at least two competing visions of sustainable development (McTiernan, 1999, pp. 98-99). According to McTiernan (1999, p. 98), one vision—the stasis or protection-oriented model—“emphasizes the need for maximum protection of the North’s renewable resources, privileges traditional activities on the land, and stresses the need for planning and regulatory processes to manage change.” A second, and alternative vision—the growth or development model—“emphasizes the need for expanding business activity in the North to stabilize, diversify, and strengthen the regional economy” (McTiernan, 1999, pp. 98-99). It is not at all clear that these two visions are reconcilable.

Ten years later there are many more ideas about the actions needed to create a sustainable future as well as the principles that should guide such actions. For example, Beatley (2000) outlines a number of these in a recent book drawing upon the experience of European cities and countries. He discusses principles such as ecosystem thinking; policy integration (to assure that the social, environmental, and economic dimensions of sustainability are effectively integrated); cooperation and partnership; and management for sustainability, that have guided such actions. Roseland presents a number of complementary ideas—sustainable community “building blocks” and ideas about how to mobilize citizens and their governments for action on a sustainability agenda—in his recent book, *Toward Sustainable Communities* (Roseland, 1998). There are many opportunities. The *challenge* is how to continue motivating Yukon’s leadership to use these “best practices” as well as other ideas, adapting them to the Yukon context (Keehley, Medlin, & MacBride, 1997).

The history of the Yukon Council on the Economy and Environment (YCEE) is instructive in this regard. Established in 1989 to replace the Yukon Economic Council, it was the first legislated roundtable on the economy and the environment established in Canada. The name change reflected the increased scope of the new council (Yukon Economic Development, 1991, pp. 1). The Council’s charge was to advise the Yukon government and encourage non-governmental organizations, individuals and businesses to adopt practices and approaches that further the goals of sustainable development in the Yukon. Its main duties as well as a number of specific responsibilities are outlined in the Environmental Act. The Economic Development Act outlines additional functions for the Council (Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment, 1999, pp. 1-4). Its responsibilities are extensive. For example, phrases such as: undertake and encourage public discussion, review policies, conduct research, promote public awareness, report annually to the legislative assembly, and so on, are part of its mandate.

Under changing Territorial governments, the Council has had and continues to have insufficient resources, including staffing, to effectively act on its responsibilities. For example, during its early years the Council had both

a limited agenda of activities and limited Territorial government support. It was not until 1997 that the Council was “reinvigorated,” assigned additional new tasks, and began seriously working on its mandated responsibilities (Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment, 1999, p. 3). Furthermore, for the Council to be effective, key stakeholder groups must be equally represented on the round table. Each stakeholder must consult regularly with constituents and after consultation be able to commit constituencies to undertaking agreed upon actions designed to achieve a more sustainable Yukon. This assures a whole system approach to sustainable development. Furthermore, the Council could play an important role in reconciling competing visions of sustainable development.

A Brief Conclusion

Yukon 2000 initiated a great deal of action planning, as well as many new initiatives and programs. Clearly many short-term goals are being achieved. However, without continuous and systematic evaluation of the implementation of the Yukon 2000 community based planning effort it is difficult to determine whether or not progress is being made toward the longer term goal of sustainability, nor the costs of that change effort.

Evaluation of this “natural experiment” is a very important undertaking. We need to continue studying it closely (Yukon Government: 1990b). Unfortunately Yukon’s Territorial government is not making this task any easier since it has failed to put into place a system for systematically monitoring, assessing, and comprehensively reporting the various efforts to achieve a more sustainable future (for example, “progress” reports, basically reporting actions taken, are available for both the Yukon Economic Strategy and the Yukon Conservation Strategy). Similar reports monitoring “progress” on the environmental side are also available (www.ycee.yk.net/publications.html). But how does one put in place an objective and measurable monitoring and reporting system that does justice to the goals of Yukon 2000 and a reporting system that will be valid as conditions (and required action items) change? One suggestion for beginning this process, and in an effort to simplify matters, would be to focus on the longer term goal of sustainability and develop indicators that could be used to measure progress toward that outcome. Setting yearly or five-year “benchmarks” would seem very appropriate, also. The Yukon Council on the Environment and the Economy is the logical agency to move assessment to this new level.

Fortunately, the YCEE has recently taken up this challenging task. Developing sustainability indicators has proven difficult, however. As one resource person pointed out, indicators need to reflect local community values while at the same time providing comparability with other jurisdictions. They also need to reflect changing interests and values but include some consistent

benchmarks over time. There is also a need for a simple and accessible reporting framework while maintaining a fair and comprehensive assessment. Aware of these challenges, the YCEE has begun looking at different ways to incorporate new developments in the sustainability indicator field into something that is accessible to the public and meets these competing concerns (Peretz & English, 2000).

Government leadership is one key facilitating factor in Yukon's new approach to building a sustainable society (Downes, 1998a; 1998b). It has done much already but much more will be required if the Yukon 2000 vision is to be realized. In addition, there are two essentials to the success of ongoing large-scale collaborative decision making, both of which seemed to have developed during Yukon's community based planning process (Downes, 1995, pp. 392-393). First, the various planning meetings acted as mediators between philosophical ideals about the environment and practical problem solving reconciling environmental and economic interests. Mediating meetings or organizations reconcile conflicting values and interests so action can occur. The newly "reinvigorated" Yukon Council on the Economy and the Environment has an important role to play as a mediating institution in the implementation process.

Second, it is important to institutionalize the principle of shared responsibility, to provide the social bond necessary for the permanence of supra-organizational partnerships. Shared responsibility implies that stakeholders take collective responsibility for past damage to the environment and for preventing future damage. Success and failure are then evaluated from a systemic and collective perspective rather than individualistic one. A commitment to shared responsibility among participants is critical to resolving conflict-provoking issues concerning the environment, economy, social equity, and health. It is also important to undertaking the actions necessary to achieve a more sustainable Yukon and to integrating as well as reporting results achieved. Here again, the YCEE can play an important role in continuing the institutionalization of this principle.

Over the past ten years, Yukoners have spent considerable time, energy, and money planning for more sustainable future. Sustainable development has become a catalytic idea for rethinking the relationship of environment and economy as complementary rather than conflicting paths of thought and action (Downes, 1995, p. 393). It is both an idea and an imperative. It provides a vision of an alternative future and a compelling rationale for action.

The opportunity for a different future is at hand. The challenge is for Yukoners and Yukon's Territorial government, along with the Federal government and other stakeholders to develop the political will to continue undertaking the actions necessary to build more sustainable communities and a more sustainable region. Much has been accomplished as a result of the Yuk-

on 2000 community-based planning process but more will be required. This includes additional capacity building to enhance community self reliance; continued development of creative and innovative programs, best practices, to meet community and regional needs; ongoing catalytic leadership by a broad number of stakeholders, including the YCEE and the Territorial government; and systematic assessment and reporting of outcomes being achieved, which include a more sustainable Yukon (Dale & Robinson, 1996; Pierce & Dale, 1999).

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